

I shall assume the following three propositions conceded:

- (1) A large-scale nuclear war would be an utter disaster, not only to the belligerents, but to mankind, and would achieve no result that any sane man could desire.
- (2) When a small war occurs, there is a considerable risk that it may turn into a great war; and in the course of many small wars the risk would ultimately become almost a certainty.
- (3) If all existing nuclear weapons had been destroyed and there were an agreement that no new ones should be manufactured, any serious war would, nevertheless, become a nuclear war as soon as the belligerents had time to manufacture the forbidden weapons.

From these three theses, it follows that, if we are to escape unimaginable catastrophes, we must find a way of avoiding all wars, whether great or small and whether intentionally nuclear or not. I think that, in a more or less undecided fashion, this conclusion is admitted by most of those who have studied the subject. But statesmen, both in the East and the West, have not arrived at any possible programme for implementing the prevention of war. Since the nuclear stalemate became apparent, the Governments of East and West have adopted the policy which Mr. Dulles calls 'brinkmanship'. This is a policy adapted from a sport which, I am told, is practised by the sons of very rich Americans. This sport is called 'Chicken!' It is played by choosing a long straight road with a white line down the middle and starting two very fast cars towards each other from opposite ends. Each car is expected to keep the wheels of one side on the white line. As they approach each other, mutual destruction becomes more and more imminent.

If one of them swerves from the white line before the other, the other, as he passes, shouts 'Chicken!', and the one who has swerved becomes an object of contempt. As played by youthful plutocrats, this game is considered decadent and immoral, though only the lives of the players are risked. But when the game is played by eminent statesmen, who risk not only their own lives but those of many hundreds of millions of human beings, it is thought on both sides that the statesmen on one side are displaying a high degree of wisdom and courage, and only the statesmen on the other side are reprehensible. This, of course, is absurd. Both are to blame for playing such an incredibly dangerous game. The game may be played without misfortune a few times, but sooner or later it will come to be felt that loss of face is more dreadful than nuclear annihilation. The moment will come when neither side can face the derisive cry of 'Chicken!' from the other side. When that moment is come, the statesmen of both sides will plunge the world into destruction.

Practical politicians may admit all this, but they argue that there is no alternative. If one side is unwilling to risk global war, while the other side is willing to risk it, the side which is willing to run the risk will be victorious in all negotiations and will ultimately reduce the other side to complete impotence. 'Perhaps'—so the practical politician will argue—'it might be ideally wise for the sane party to yield to the insane party in view of the dreadful nature of the alternative, but, whether wise or not, no proud nation will long acquiesce in such an ignominious role. We are, therefore, faced, quite inevitably, with the choice between brinkmanship and surrender.'

This view has governed policy on both sides in recent years. I cannot admit that brinkmanship and surrender are the only alternatives. What the situation requires is a quite different line of conduct, no longer governed by the motives of the contest for power, but by motives appealing

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to the common welfare and the common interests of the rival parties. What needs to be done is, first of all, psychological. There must be a change of mood and a change of aim, and this must occur on both sides if it is to achieve its purpose. Possibly the initiative, in so far as it is governmental, may have to come from uncommitted nations; but the general attitude to be desired is one which, in the committed nations of East and West, will have to be first advocated by individuals and groups capable of commanding respect.

The argument to be addressed to East and West alike will have to be something on the following lines. Each side has vital interests which it is not prepared to sacrifice. Neither side can defeat the other except by defeating itself at the same time. The interests in which the two sides conflict are immeasurably less important than those in which they are at one. The first and most important of their common interests is survival. This has become a common interest owing to the nature of nuclear weapons.

It might be possible for Americans or some of them, to desire a world containing no Russians; and it might be possible for Russians, or some of them, to desire a world containing no Americans; but neither Americans nor Russians would desire a world in which both nations had been wiped out. Since it must be assumed that a war between Russia and America would exterminate both, the two countries have a common interest in the preservation of peace. Their common survival should, therefore, be the supreme aim of policy on both sides. A second motive for agreement is the need to escape from the burdens of

The arms race. If present policies continue, this burden will grow greater and greater as time goes on. More and more expensive weapons will be invented, more and more labour will be diverted from the production of consumable commodities to the production of lethal weapons. Before very long, the population in each group will be reduced to subsistence level. New inventions, which in other circumstances might be beneficent, will no longer be so, since every increase in productivity will release more labour for warlike purposes. If one side rebels sooner than the other against the burden of this insanity, it will incur a risk of defeat and, in the bitter atmosphere produced by the dreadful danger, this risk will appear one to be avoided at almost any sacrifice.

It is not only prevention of evils, but the securing of immense goods, that can result from a cessation of tension between the two groups. Scientific technique has become capable of raising the standard of life in every part of the world, and more especially in the poorer parts. There is no reason except human folly for the perpetuation of a lower standard of life in Asia and Africa than that which now prevails in America. But if the arms race continues, the standard of life in America must gradually decline towards the level now prevailing in the poorest parts of the world, and, instead of the universal material well-being which has become technically possible; we shall have a universal poverty as dire as mutual hatreds can cause rival nations to endure.

Nor is it only in material ways that the present hostility of East and West is harmful. It is even more harmful in the sphere of morality and emotion. We have been told on the highest governmental authority that, if Britain became involved in a nuclear war, no serious attempt would be made to defend the civilian population, but those in charge of missiles and bombs to be fired against Russia would be kept alive a little longer than the civilians and could in their last moments cause some hundreds of millions of deaths in Russia. These last survivors would die knowing that their own nation no longer existed, but enjoying (or so one must suppose) the



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sweet thought of a useless revenge. I am not saying this as a special criticism of British policy. A very similar policy is advocated throughout the two hostile groups. Even religion is often enlisted in its support, and many people sincerely though mistakenly believe that it can be justified by idealistic motives. The mentality which makes such an outlook possible, however sincere it may be, is morally dreadful and poisons all wholesome thought and feeling in those who allow themselves to be dominated by it.

For all these reasons, not only idealistic motives, but the plainest and most insistent motives of self-interest make it imperative that East and West should no longer seek to settle their differences by war or the threat of war. If East and West, alike, can admit the force of the very plain and simple arguments in favour of this conclusion, it will no longer seem impossible to find other methods by which agreements as to dispute matters can be reached. Hitherto, agreements have been difficult because they were not genuinely desired by either side unless they constituted diplomatic victories. But, if it comes to be realized by both sides that it is more important to reach agreements than to win diplomatic victories, it will soon be found that impartial agreements are not nearly so difficult as was thought.

It should be made clear by those who advocate the point of view that I have been trying to recommend that it is a view put forward, not in the special interests of the West or in the special interests of the East, and that it does not aim at giving to either side any advantage not balanced by an equal advantage to the other side. The essential points which both sides must realize are that the continuation of conflict is disastrous to both, and that the gain to both to be derived from concord is one of quite immeasurable magnitude.

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